

**IS YOUR BASEMENT OR ROOF LEAKING?  
ARE YOU CONSIDERING ADDING AN ADDITION TO YOUR HOME?  
HERE ARE SOME OF THE THINGS THAT YOU NEED TO THINK ABOUT  
BEFORE SELECTING A HOME IMPROVEMENT CONTRACTOR**

**1. Is a home improvement contractor required to be licensed to do work in the District of Columbia?**

Generally, yes. District of Columbia Municipal Regulations Title 16, Chapter 8 states that no person shall require or accept any payment for a home improvement contract in advance of the full completion of all work required to be performed under the contract, unless that person is licensed as a home improvement contractor or as a licensed salesperson employed by a licensed contractor in accordance with the provisions of this chapter. However, if the home improvement contract is for less than \$300.00 a contractor is not required to have a home improvement contractor's license. If during a twelve-month period, the contractor enters into a subsequent contract with you, and the total of all the contracts is \$300.00 or more, then the contractor is required to have a Home Improvement Contractor's license.

**2. How can I determine if a home improvement contractor is licensed to do business in the District of Columbia?**

Contact the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs Business License Center on the first floor of 941 North Capitol Street, NE, Washington, DC, or call the Info Center on 202-442-4311 to determine if the contractor is licensed and his licensing address. Do not rely on a contractor saying he is licensed or his presenting a business card or a contract with a license number. Verify the accuracy of the information before signing a contract.

**3. Should I sign a contract that has blank spaces?**

Never sign a contract that has blank spaces. District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, Title 16, Section 808.15 states that "Each contract shall contain a notice in bold type no smaller than ten (10) point stating in substance that the homeowner shall not sign the contract in blank, and that the homeowner is entitled to a copy of the contract at the time he signs.

**4. Should I be given a copy of the contract once I have signed it?**

Yes, once you sign the contract you should be given a copy of it. If at that time the contractor has not signed the contract it should be signed by the salesman and should contain his license number. Upon execution of the contract by the contractor, the homeowner shall be furnished a copy of the contract, which contains his signature, and that of the contractor.

**5. Should the name, address and telephone number of the contractor be identified on his contract?**

Each contract for home improvement work must bear the name, address, and telephone number of the home improvement contractor and his home improvement contractor's license number.

**6. Should my contract contain a detailed description of the work to be done and what materials are to be used?**

Know exactly what work you want to have done and have it included in your contract. Never assume that the contractor knows exactly what you want. Make certain that the contract has a detailed description of the specifications of the work and any specific materials that are to be used.

**7. If there is a change in contract specifications, should they be in writing?**

Yes, if the specifications are changed, the changes must be put in writing. The homeowner must approve all changes.

**8. Is the contractor required to have insurance and a surety bond?**

Yes, he is required to have insurance. The contractor must have a policy for \$50,000 for bodily injury for a single accident, \$100,000 in the aggregate for more than one person in any single accident, and \$10,000 for property damage in any single accident. Also, the contractor must provide the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs with a \$5,000 surety bond.

**9. What is classified as home improvement work?**

Home improvement work is the construction of one or more additions to, or other improvement, repair, restoration, alteration, conversion, or replacement on residential property. The term "home improvement: work shall not extend to or include the sale or installation of any appliance, materials, household furnishings, or equipment, if not made a part of the realty. The term "home improvement" work shall not extend to or include work performed by licensed electricians, licensed plumbers and gasfitters, or licensed refrigeration and air conditioning mechanics, so long as the work performed by them is limited to that of their licensed occupations.

**10. How can I determine if the work that is being done is required to have a permit?**

Contact the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs, Building and Land Regulation Administration, Records Management Section at 941 North Capitol Street, NE, Room 2100, or call 202-442-4480 to determine if a permit is needed or if a permit has been obtained for the work.

**11. Where do I call to file a complaint against a contractor?**

You may call a Dispute Resolution Specialist at the Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs on 202-442-8475.

**12. Is it okay to pay the contractor with cash?**

Yes, but always obtain a receipt which shows how much you have paid and what, if any, balance remains.

**13. Should I maintain any type of journal of the work that is being done?**

It would be a good idea to maintain a journal of how the work is progressing and who is doing the work. This way it is easier to determine if the persons who are performing the work are required to have a license.